

## 1<sup>st</sup> session of the FAO Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management (SCFM)

### **Statement of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) on Agenda item No. 3 *'Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the context of effective fisheries management'***

Thank you, Mr Chair, for giving me the virtual floor, and since this is the first time, I would like to thank the FAO for the excellent preparation of this meeting, and congratulations to you, Mr Chair, for your election.

I am representing the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (or short FiTI), which is a global multi-stakeholder partnership that seeks to increase the public accessibility, quality and understandability of marine fisheries management information. And I would like to express my appreciation to the FAO for being a permanent observer to the FiTI process from its beginning.

Transparency is a concept that is seemingly hard to disagree with. However, while still not a priority for many governments (even though we are seeing improvements), it is also often used in ways that could be confusing or misleading. With regards to the matter at hand of IUU fisheries I would like to make the following three remarks related to transparency:

First, we appreciate very much the opening remarks for this session, which reminded us to at the term IUU lumps three often different aspects together into one admittedly handy acronym. What is worrisome is that the discussions around IUU is currently clearly dominated by the first letter ('I'), often branding the entire term as a synonym for illegality or for fighting crime. Unfortunately, with this negative branding comes one additional twist, and that is that IUU is too frequently

depicted as primarily an external threat to legal fisheries and nation states, which neglects the issue of internal governance struggles.

Second, when we talk about transparency as a tool to combat illegal fishing, as well as unreported or unregulated fishing we should not lose sight of the fact that transparency in fisheries requires a multi-purpose approach – utilising transparency for scientific, management and compliance purposes. So in addition to ocean-based transparency efforts to counter illegal activities at sea, such as technology-supported vessel tracking and monitoring, we also need to strengthen national frameworks for transparency of fisheries management, so that governments publish regularly important information in this particular regard, such as vessel registries, licence lists or catch and discard data. Without such basic information, it is often not even clear what is illegal and what is not. And I would like to applaud the efforts of several of FiTI implementing countries, such as Seychelles, Mauritania, Madagascar and Cabo Verde – who are now regularly publishing such information in the public domain, and continuously improving this data for public understanding. And we are expecting similar endeavours from Ecuador, Sao Tome and Principe and Guinea during 2024.

Third and finally, we at the Fisheries Transparency Initiative firmly believe that transparency is a process that must be coupled with participatory governance, involving national stakeholders from public authorities, industrial and artisanal fisheries as well as civil society organisations, and we are committed to support our FiTI implementing countries in establish national multi-stakeholder groups, so that the best available data is available to contribute to better and more inclusive decision-making, as well as to enable all stakeholders in exercising effective oversight and engage in public dialogue. Thank you very much Mister Chair.